



MIAMI BEACH

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Miami Beach Honors Women Worth Knowing

Miami Beach, FL – In celebration of Women's History Month, the City of Miami Beach Commission on the Status of Women will honor local women for their contributions to the community in a ceremony on **Thursday, March 30, 6:30 p.m.**, at the South Beach Marriott, 161 Ocean Drive, Miami Beach. The **Women Worth Knowing** program will celebrate the achievements of **Jo Asmundsson, Dale Gratz, Jane Gross** and **Merle Weiss**. Each honoree will be given a certificate from the City, honoring their commitment and hard work to the community.

The **Women Worth Knowing** program honors women who have made a difference to the community. Each of the women is actively involved in fostering positive change in the community through involvement in civic activities.

Jo Asmundsson has been making a difference in Miami Beach since she first arrived 25 years ago. After leaving her native England (where she was a CEO of five companies), Jo traveled a lot which she says taught her "how to be tolerant and to listen." Jo has served as board member and treasurer of the Miami-Dade Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce and remains an active member, proving that she is straight but not narrow. She is also a member of the board of Friends of the Miami Public Library System and actively helps them with their book sales each year. A constant presence at Miami Beach's City Hall, Jo was in her fifth year serving as president of the Miami Beach Taxpayers Association and as co-chair of the governmental committee of the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce when she resigned to run for Miami Beach City Commission. Among her proudest achievements is getting 3,000 votes and coming in third in the race where she was one woman against six men. She has served on the board of WLRN (local National Public Radio affiliate) for three years and hers is one of the voices you hear in their on-air fundraising drives. Jo has also been a reader with WLRN's Radio Reading Service for 16 years. Jo takes great pride in having worked on the gubernatorial campaigns of both Janet Reno and for Bill McBride. Now, Jo serves

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on the Miami Beach Community Development Corporation where she devotes her time and talent to supplying affordable housing in the City of Miami Beach. Jo sums up her philosophy by saying "I usually go for people who've been given the wrong end of the stick."

Dale Gratz is originally from Tampa, Florida, but has lived in Miami Beach for over forty years. She and her husband have three grown children and five grandchildren (including a set of triplets, age two). Dale received her degree from Sophie Newcomb College (today part of Tulane University) and spent several years as a social worker in New Orleans and Chicago. Throughout her 40 years on Miami Beach, Dale has never hesitated to give of herself to her community. She began her volunteer efforts with the National Council of Jewish Women and today is a lifetime member of that organization. She served as a Guardian Ad Litem for 11 years, advocating on behalf of abused and neglected children. Dale has volunteered in area public schools and served as a mentor for at-risk students. She has served on the Board of Trustees and the School Board for Temple Beth Sholom, in addition to volunteering in the synagogue's monthly "Feeding the Hungry" program for the past 15 years. Eight years ago, Dale signed on as poll worker earning minimum wage "to help make voting a more pleasant experience" for the citizens of Miami Beach. Also, Dale is a long-time member of the Commission on the Status of Women until she was recently "termed out." Dale is one of those quiet, tireless worker bees. When told she would receive this award, she was shocked, overwhelmingly honored, and most of all, humble. "I feel unworthy," she said. "I've never done anything big or spectacular." However her outlook on life sums it all up: "I've always felt fortunate in my life and felt I had to give back in some way or I would not be able to live with myself."

Jane Dee Gross' dedication to the Miami Beach community and long hours of volunteer service is the reason why the Committee is honoring her as a Miami Beach "Woman Worth Knowing." Jane relocated to Miami Beach in the early 1980s after a successful corporate marketing career in Connecticut; met and married not yet Commissioner Saul Gross in the late 80s and gave birth to Jonathan in 1990. Anonymous benefit projects have always been Jane's favorites however, she regularly volunteers for a wide variety of civic organizations; Temple Beth Shalom, Daily Bread Food Bank, Community Partnership for the Homeless, New Life Family Shelter, American Cancer Society, WLRN Radio Reading Services for the Blind, Miami-Dade School System. She is a Board member of People Acting for Community Together (PACT), Miami Design Preservation League and the Miami Beach Community Health Center. A favorite quote of Jane's is "Life is what happens to you when you're busy making other plans," *John Lennon 1980*.

Merle Weiss might be the most photographed woman on Miami Beach. She is a South Beach institution, original, interesting and involved. She moved to Miami Beach in 1985 and has served on the boards of several prominent organizations including the Miami Beach Cultural Arts Council, DASH, Miami Beach Fine Arts Board, Art Center South Florida, Miami Film Festival, Miami Gay and Lesbian Film

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Festival, Dade Human Rights Foundation, and Miami Beach Art in Public Places. With her tough love attitude she gets things done. With glitz, glitter and glamour, she not only knows how to make money for the groups she loves but she knows how to have fun. She has been on the events and/or planning committee for several groups including Wolfsonian-FIU Museum, Miami Light Project, Winter Party, Museum of Contemporary Art and Dance for Life. In addition to her community involvement, Merle was a pioneer in the Miami Beach retail industry. She opened Merle's Closet on Lincoln Road in 1990, when the road was deserted and people were afraid to venture there after dark. With her colleagues at Art Center South Florida she was one of the catalysts that helped bring the road back to life. She has also worked for Av-Med Health Plan and Miami-Dade County government. Married to Danny, Merle is a proud mother of three sons and a grandmother of five. Merle has always had an interest in others and believes in the power of individuals to change the world. She gets involved in the community to make a difference. You will see Merle at all the best and most important events and happenings. If you want to go places you need to know Merle. With sparkle and dazzle and the moxie to get things done Merle Weiss is not only a Woman Worth Knowing, she is a woman everyone wants to know.

The Commission on the Status of Women seeks nominations for women who are actively involved in fostering positive change in the community through involvement in civic and/or professional activities and meet the prerequisite and qualifications. Nominee shall either a) be a resident of the City (for a minimum of two years); or b) have demonstrated ownership/interest for a minimum of two years in a business established in the City. The nominee has to be involved in activities for the betterment of the community on a local, state or national level; and have interests and activities reach beyond the home and the workplace.

The Miami Beach Commission on the Status of Women serves as an advisory capacity to the City Commission. The purpose of the Commission is to support efforts for economic, political, and social equality and opportunity for all women, with special emphasis on the needs of women on Miami Beach.

For more information, contact Maria Martinez, liaison to the Commission on the Status of Women, at 305-673-7411.

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